

MAINE HEALTH ALERT NETWORK



*Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
(Formerly Bureau of Health)
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Phone 1-800-821-5821 / Fax 207-287-7443*

*****ADVISORY – Important Information*****

2009PHADV042

TO: All Health Care

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Air Quality Alert for Southwest Coastal Region

DATE: August 17, 2009

TIME: 11:50 a.m.

PAGES: 2

PRIORITY: High

Confidentiality Notice: This fax message is intended for the exclusive use of the individual or entity identified above. It may contain information, which is privileged and/or confidential under both state and federal law. If you are not notified otherwise, any further dissemination, copying, or disclosure of the communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this transmittal in error, please immediately notify us at 287-6551 and return the original transmission to us by mail at Key Bank Plaza, 6th Floor-286 Water Street, Augusta, ME 04333, without making a copy. Your cooperation in protecting confidential information is greatly appreciated.

Air Quality Alert for Monday and Tuesday

(AUGUSTA)-- Ground-level ozone concentrations are expected to reach unhealthy levels in the Southwest Coastal Region and the High Elevations of Acadia on Monday according to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Unhealthy levels of ozone are expected to continue and include more of the coast on Tuesday. Meanwhile, particle pollution levels are expected to be in the Moderate Range for both days. The combination of multiple pollutants in addition to the heat and humidity will likely cause health problems for children, the elderly and anyone with a heart or lung disease. Everyone is encouraged to limit outdoor exertion.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently revised the national ozone standard from 84 ppb to 75 ppb. At the same time, the Air Quality Index (AQI) for ozone was revised to reflect the new lower standard. If Maine has a typical summer this year, the DEP will likely be encouraging you to take precautions to protect your health more often than usual because of this revised standard.

At high ozone levels, individuals suffering from a respiratory disease such as asthma, children, and healthy active adults can experience reduced lung function and irritation. When this happens, individuals may notice a shortness of breath, coughing, throat irritation, and/or experience an uncomfortable sensation in their chest.

Some actions you can take to protect your health during periods of unhealthy air quality include:

- ◆ Avoid strenuous activity, such as jogging, during mid-day.
- ◆ Close windows and circulate indoor air with a fan or air conditioner.
- ◆ Avoid using aerosol products such as cleaners, paints, and other lung irritants.
- ◆ Give yourself a break! Take it easy!

Ground level ozone is formed by chemical reactions between nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and sunlight. Man-made sources of NO_x and VOCs include automobiles, trucks and buses, large combustion and industrial sources such as power generating facilities, consumer products such as paints and cleaners, and gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

Citizens can take the following actions to help reduce emissions that contribute to the formation of ozone:

- Conserve electricity.
- Choose a cleaner commute, such as carpooling or using public transportation.
- Defer the use of gas-powered lawn and garden equipment until after dusk.
- Limit idling of vehicles.
- Refuel cars and trucks after dusk.
- Combine errands and reduce vehicle trips.
- Use environmentally-friendly paints and cleaning products with low VOC content.

For more information call DEP's toll free ozone hotline at 1-800-223-1196 or visit DEP's air quality web site by going to MaineDEP.com and select 'Maine Air Quality Forecast.'